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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: DUMA LINKS KOSOVO AND NATO MAP TO FROZEN
CONFLICTS' RECOGNITION

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Russell: Reasons 1.4 (B/D
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1. (SBU) Summary: In a March 21 statement, the Duma urged Putin to consider recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the wake of Kosovo's independence, and to "protect" Russian citizens resident in the frozen conflicts from Georgia's drive for NATO membership. The unanimous vote, coming a week after the March 13 special hearings on the same topic, reinforced Russian warnings that Kosovo would have consequences for other frozen conflicts and underscored Moscow's opposition to a Georgian MAP offer. The MFA has been silent about the Duma statement, with expert circles continuing to downplay the immediate prospect of Russian diplomatic recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Transnistria's scant mention in the document has been interpreted as evidence of progress in a Putin-Voronin brokered settlement. The Duma's unsubtle NATO linkage reflects the Russian political establishment view that Georgian NATO aspirations should have a high cost. End summary.

12. (C) Following a March 13 closed, special session of the Duma on Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, on March 21 deputies voted unanimously (440 to 0, in the 450-seat house) on a resolution urging Putin to "consider the question of the expediency of recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." The statement, explicitly evoking both Kosovo's independence and Georgia's request for NATO MAP, included the following arguments:

-- Kosovo's independence, at odds with international law, necessitated the change in Russian policy vis-a-vis Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria. The frozen conflict territories, which have been practically independent for years, enjoy stronger grounds for recognition by the international community. The fact that South and North Ossetia are ethnically the same strengthened the case for their union.

-- Georgia has a sovereign right to join NATO, but Russia has the right to respect the will of its citizens and to "protect" its own citizens residing in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who oppose NATO. The Duma judged that Georgia's quest for full integration into NATO deprived it of an opportunity to consolidate its territory.

-- Russia should counter any attempt to exert external political, economic, military pressure on Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

-- Russia, in response to calls from its citizens in the frozen conflict areas, should consider establishing a

mission in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, simplifying to the greatest possible extent border crossing procedures between Russia and these regions, as well as providing them with economic, social and humanitarian assistance.

-- Russia should re-examine and strengthen peacekeeping efforts in the conflict areas. The withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers could lead to catastrophic consequences for the civilian population and the destabilization of the region.

-- In the event of a Georgian military aggression or steps toward the forced entry of Georgia into NATO, Russia should take countermeasures to protect its citizens in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and quicken the process of making these regions the Russian Federation's "subjects."

Duma Maintains Pressure

14. (C) Experts agreed that the Duma action was tailored to underscore the GOR's repeated warnings on the consequences of Kosovo, but downplayed the prospect of any near-term move to recognize the independence of the frozen conflicts. Instead, Editor of "Russia in Global Affairs" Fyodor Lukyanov argued that the resolution was rhetorical compensation for Russia's refusal to cede to the demands of the frozen conflict leaders. Institute for Strategic Analysis Sergey Markedonov echoed this analysis, maintaining that the resolution was also intended to placate "radical" Russians, who would like to see a tougher posture on recognition. Markedonov underscored to us that the resolution exemplified the contradictions in Russian policy. On the one hand, it recognized Georgia's territorial integrity, only to call for recognition of the frozen governments a few paragraphs later.

The fact that Transnistria, which featured in the resolution's title, scarcely appeared in the text, was viewed by many as evidence that an acceptable deal was in the works between Putin and Voronin, including acknowledgment of Russian ownership of "privatized" industries in Transnistria.

Comment: MAP Factor

15. (C) The Duma resolution was crafted with a clear eye to the April 2-4 NATO Bucharest summit. By undertaking to review the question of diplomatic recognition of the frozen territories in light of whether Georgia received a MAP offer, the Russian political establishment has sent a not-so-subtle signal.

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